United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1090
2 March 1992

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ General Assembly admits nine States to United Nations membership, including eight former Soviet Republics and San Marino, bringing to 175 total number of United Nations Member States.

+ Preparatory Committee for United Nations Conference on Environment and Development hears statement by Secretary-General of the Conference Maurice Strong as it begins fourth and final session at Headquarters.

+ Iraq says that, while it has repatriated 6,520 Kuwaitis or third-country nationals to Kuwait, International Committee of the Red Cross has not responded to request by Iraq to organize search for missing Iraqis in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

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At its resumed its forty-sixth session this morning, the General Assembly admitted by acclamation nine States to membership of the United Nations. The nine -- eight former Republics of the Soviet Union: Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Armenia -- and San Marino, bring to 175 the total number of United Nations Member States.

In a statement to the General Assembly, its President Samir S. Shihabi (Saudi Arabia), welcomed the newly admitted States as full fledged members of the United Nations, saying he looked forward to their contribution in their own interest and in the interest of mankind. He expressed the hope that the Organization would be strengthened with the admission of the States.

At the flag-raising ceremony following the Assembly's action, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali stated that once again, within the short period of six months, the United Nations was welcoming a significant number of new Members and taking another step forward towards universality. He noted that the United Nations membership had more than tripled since its founding in 1945.

Among other topics considered by the General Assembly during its resumed session today was a letter from the Permanent Representative of Egypt

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requesting that the question of restructuring the Secretariat be taken up directly in the Assembly. The Assembly also debates the request by the Secretary-General for the inclusion of an additional item entitled "Financing of the United Nations Protection Force to be dispatched to Yugoslavia".

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The Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development began today at Headquarters its fourth and final session of preparations for the Conference, which will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 2 to 12 June.

During its session, which will last until 3 April, the Committee will discuss how to provide additional financial resources and environmentally sound technologies to developing countries.

Deliberations will also focus on proposals for the two main documents expected to be adopted at Rio de Janeiro: Agenda 21, a major comprehensive plan of Action extending into the twenty-first century and covering major areas affecting the relationship between the environment and the economy; and the Earth Charter/Rio de Janeiro Declaration on Environment and Development -- a set of principles on rights and obligations which must govern the economic and environmental behaviour of peoples and nations to ensure "our common future".

This final session will be essentially a negotiating one with no general discussion on issues or reports, but with the bulk of the work being conducted in informal meetings.

Addressing the Preparatory Committee this afternoon, the Secretary-General of the Conference, Maurice Strong, urged that all the issues pending before the Committee must be resolved in this final session, saying it would not be feasible to leave unresolved questions on the expectation that they could be dealt with at Rio.

Mr. Strong expressed the hope that the Committee would thus successfully provide the foundations for what he believed would be a historic success in Rio, in producing the "new global partnership" that would set the world community on a new course to a "more sustainable, secure and equitable future" as the 21st century was moving closer.

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Iraq has stated that, while it has returned 6,520 Kuwaitis or third-country nationals, both soldiers and civilians, to Kuwait, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) since March 1991, the Committee has not responded to a request by Iraq that it coordinate a similar search for missing Iraqis in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 8 February, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq Ahmad Hussein stated that there were at present some

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3,600 Kuwaitis in Iraq who were not detainees but who "are at liberty, and are living a normal life and may move about" in Iraq. They had been given the opportunity to register with the ICRC in Baghdad and to submit applications in order to return to Kuwait of their own free will. However, he said, the Kuwaiti authorities had only given clearance for the immediate repatriation of 468 persons.

The Iraqi Minister pointed out that Iraq was "closely observing" attempts being made to "exploit this matter" in order to wage media campaigns aimed at "deluding Arab and international public opinions into believing that Iraq is detaining large numbers of Kuwaitis and is refusing to repatriate them". (S/23661)

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